Geographic Information Science

Program of Study

Spatial thinking deals with the fundamental role of space, place, location, distance, and interaction—crucial to tackling many research questions in the social and physical sciences. The minor in geographic information science provides a coherent exposure to rigorous spatial thinking and its expression through the theories and methods of geographic information science.

Geographic information science covers all aspects pertaining to accessing, storing, transforming, manipulating, visualizing, exploring, and reasoning about information where the locational component is important (spatial data). This includes the technical and computational aspects of geographic information systems, the methodologies of spatial analysis and spatial statistics, mapping, and geo-visualization, as well as societal aspects related to the use of geographic data.

The minor serves as a complement to other majors, such as computer science, statistics, economics, public policy studies, sociology, anthropology, political science, or environmental and urban studies, but would also be of value to majors in the humanities and physical sciences interested in the spatial aspects of their field.

Program Requirements for the Minor

The minor consists of six courses: two prerequisites, three core methods courses, and one elective from a series of offerings. The core methods courses provide a coherent exposure to rigorous spatial thinking and its incorporation into the methodologies of geographic information systems, spatial analysis, and spatial data science.

The electives consist of courses that touch upon various aspects of spatial thinking, with different degrees of technical materials, and are intended to either act as “gateways” into the minor or to provide the opportunity for the application of spatial analysis in a range of fields.

GISC 28400 GIScience Practicum serves as an optional capstone course for the minor. In the course, students will develop a multifaceted GIS project incorporating spatial thinking in design, infrastructure, and implementation. Projects could include the development of a web application, dynamic dashboard, interactive storytelling map, infographic-driven policy brief, or research article and can be carried out in conjunction with a thesis requirement of the student’s major.

Summary of Requirements: Minor in Geographic Information Science

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Units</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STAT 22000</td>
<td>Statistical Methods and Applications (or equivalent)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or DATA 11800</td>
<td>Introduction to Data Science I</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 28702</td>
<td>Introduction to GIS and Spatial Analysis (or equivalent introductory GIS course (by petition))</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three core methods courses from the approved list</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any elective from the list of courses below</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Units</td>
<td>600</td>
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* Students who take STAT 22000 or DATA 11800 to satisfy a major requirement will complete a five-course (500-unit) minor.

Core Methods Options for the Minor in Geographic Information Science

Three of the following courses must be taken to fulfill the core methods requirement for the minor in geographic information science.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GISC 20500</td>
<td>Introduction to Spatial Data Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 27100</td>
<td>Cartographic Design and Geovisualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 28100</td>
<td>Introduction to Geocomputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 28200</td>
<td>Spatial Analysis Methods in Geographic Information Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>GISC 28300</td>
<td>Topics in Geographic Information Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>GISC 28400</td>
<td>GIScience Practicum</td>
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Elective Options for the Minor in Geographic Information Science

A fourth core methods course or one of the following courses may be taken to fulfill the elective course option for the minor in geographic information science. Course availability varies by year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GISC 20061</td>
<td>Ancient Landscapes I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 20062</td>
<td>Ancient Landscapes II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 20273</td>
<td>Urban Spatial Archaeology I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Code</td>
<td>Course Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>GISC 20519</td>
<td>Spatial Cluster Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 20559</td>
<td>Spatial Regression Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 25900</td>
<td>Introduction to Location Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 27102</td>
<td>Spatial Cognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 27104</td>
<td>Movement Data and Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 27105</td>
<td>Web Mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 27110</td>
<td>Spatial Thinking in Historical Cartography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 28700</td>
<td>Readings in Spatial Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 28800</td>
<td>History of Cartography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GISC 29000</td>
<td>Reading/Research: Geographic Information Sciences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ADVISING AND GRADING**

Courses in the minor may not be double-counted with the student's major(s), other minors, or general education requirements.

Courses in the minor must be taken for quality grades, and more than half of the requirements for the minor must be met by registering for courses bearing University of Chicago course numbers.

Students who elect the minor must confer with the program before the end of Spring Quarter of their third year to declare their intention to complete the minor. The director's approval for the minor program should be submitted to the student's College adviser by the deadline above using the Consent to Complete a Minor Program (https://humanities-web.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/college-prod/s3fs-public/public/documents/Consent_Minor_Program.pdf) form.

Students may petition the program to have a course counted as an elective that is not included on the current list of electives.

**GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SCIENCE COURSES**

**GISC 20061. Ancient Landscapes I. 100 Units.**

This is a two-course sequence that introduces students to theory and method in landscape studies and the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to analyze archaeological, anthropological, historical, and environmental data. Course one covers the theoretical and methodological background necessary to understand spatial approaches to landscape and the fundamentals of using ESRI’s ArcGIS software, and further guides students in developing a research proposal. Course two covers more advanced GIS-based analysis (using vector, raster, and satellite remote sensing data) and guides students in carrying out their own spatial research project.

In both courses, techniques are introduced through the discussion of case studies (focused on the archaeology of the Middle East) and through demonstration of software skills. During supervised laboratory times, the various techniques and analyses covered will be applied to sample archaeological data and also to data from a region/topic chosen by the student.

Instructor(s): Mehrnoush Soroush
Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): NEAA 30061, ANTH 36710, CEGU 30061, GISC 30061, ANTH 26710, CEGU 20061, NEAA 20061

**GISC 20062. Ancient Landscapes II. 100 Units.**

This is a two-course sequence that introduces students to theory and method in landscape studies and the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to analyze archaeological, anthropological, historical, and environmental data. Course one covers the theoretical and methodological background necessary to understand spatial approaches to landscape and the fundamentals of using ESRI’s ArcGIS software, and further guides students in developing a research proposal. Course two covers more advanced GIS-based analysis (using vector, raster, and satellite remote sensing data) and guides students in carrying out their own spatial research project.

In both courses, techniques are introduced through the discussion of case studies (focused on the archaeology of the Middle East) and through demonstration of software skills. During supervised laboratory times, the various techniques and analyses covered will be applied to sample archaeological data and also to data from a region/topic chosen by the student.

Instructor(s): Mehrnoush Soroush
Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): NEAA 20061
Equivalent Course(s): NEAA 20062, ANTH 36711, GISC 30062, CEGU 30062, ANTH 26711, NEAA 30062, CEGU 20062

**GISC 20500. Introduction to Spatial Data Science. 100 Units.**

Spatial data science consists of a collection of concepts and methods drawn from both statistics and computer science that deal with accessing, manipulating, visualizing, exploring and reasoning about geographical data. The course introduces the types of spatial data relevant in social science inquiry and reviews a range of methods to explore these data. Topics covered include formal spatial data structures, geovisualization and visual analytics, rate smoothing, spatial autocorrelation, cluster detection and spatial data mining. An important aspect of the course is to learn and apply open source GeoDa software.

Instructor(s): Staff
Terms Offered: Autumn
GISC 25900. Introduction to Location Analysis. 100 Units.
Optimizing the location of facilities and services - agricultural, industrial, retail, and knowledge-based - has long been a focus for geographers, regional scientists, and urban planners. This course covers several foundational location problems in economic geography and urban planning, such as: covering problems, center problems, median problems, and fix charge facility location problems. This course incorporates several GIS exercises to teach students the basic principles of spatial optimization and to help illuminate the foundational theoretical principles of location modeling.
Instructor(s): Yue Lin Terms Offered: Winter. Offered 2024–25
Equivalent Course(s): GISC 35900, CEGU 25900
GISC 27100. Cartographic Design and Geovisualization. 100 Units.
This course is a hands-on introduction to core principles and techniques associated with cartographic design, especially with regards to digital map design and the geographic visualization of data. Main topics include map generalization, symbology, scale, visual variables, scales of measurement, 2D and 3D design, map animation and interaction, and web mapping. Students will work with open-source GIS software and web tools, culminating in a final project and peer critique.
Instructor(s): Crystal Bae Terms Offered: Spring. Offered 2024–25
Equivalent Course(s): CEGU 27100, CHST 27100, GISC 37100, ENST 27111

GISC 27102. Spatial Cognition. 100 Units.
This course serves as an overview of spatial cognition and environmental perception, which relates to all aspects of spatial thinking, spatial behavior, and human-environment interaction in spatial and social contexts. Topics of study include cognitive maps and wayfinding behavior, spatial and environmental learning, spatial choice and decision-making, migration and travel, time geography, place and regional identity, and the role of gender and culture in spatial cognition.
Instructor(s): Crystal Bae Terms Offered: Spring. Offered 2023-24
Equivalent Course(s): CHST 27102, CEGU 27102, ENST 28722, GISC 37102

GISC 27104. Movement Data and Analysis. 100 Units.
This is a methodological course overviewing movement data types, common data sources and applications, movement representations and scale, movement parameters, 2D and 3D representations of movement, and types of visualization approaches (trajectories, flow maps, network-based). The topics covered draw from application areas in human transportation, temporary travel and migration, and non-human animal movement.
Instructor(s): Crystal Bae Terms Offered: Winter. Offered 2024-25
Equivalent Course(s): GISC 37104

GISC 27105. Web Mapping. 100 Units.
This course will provide an introduction to Internet-based Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and web cartography. Students will develop proficiency with programming concepts underlying the creation and implementation of quality web mapping applications through hands-on experience creating applications with popular web mapping platforms such as Leaflet and ArcGIS Maps SDK for JavaScript.
Instructor(s): Robert Shepard Terms Offered: Spring 2023-24
Prerequisite(s): GISC 28702 Introduction to GIS & Spatial Analysis, GISC 20500 Introduction to Spatial Data Science, or equivalent training in GIS is strongly recommended
Equivalent Course(s): GISC 37105

GISC 27106. Geospatial Data Science for Urban Applications. 100 Units.
During the middle decades of the 20th century, government-backed demolition occurred under a variety of housing and transportation programs, often referred to under the heading “urban renewal.” Significant scholarship in sociology, economics and urban studies has explored the theoretical implications of this tumultuous period. This course will compliment this theoretical background by offering a hands-on learning experience in which students will digitally recreate what was lost during the urban renewal period. The course will offer students practical experience in utilizing geospatial techniques to tackle real-world urban challenges. Through a hands-on approach, participants will learn to use machine learning tools to digitally reconstruct historic places.
Instructor(s): Yue Lin Terms Offered: Autumn. Offered 2024–25
Equivalent Course(s): GISC 37106

GISC 27110. Spatial Thinking in Historical Cartography. 100 Units.
The course will introduce students to the ways in which cartographers in the English-speaking world have conceived of representing spatial patterns in map form, and how that has changed over time beginning in the 18th century, given changes in world view, cultural background, cartographic technology, business organization, and educational fashion. The objective is to sharpen students’ ability to think critically about how maps have been produced in history, evaluate their design, effectiveness, and limitations, and the uses to which they have been put.
Instructor(s): M. Conzen Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): This course can be counted toward as a 4th year CEGU/ENST Capstone course. Equivalent Course(s): CEGU 27110, ENST 27110, CHST 27110

GISC 27155. Urban Design with Nature. 100 Units.
This course will use the Chicago region as the setting to evaluate the social, environmental, and economic effects of alternative forms of human settlement. Students will examine the history, theory and practice of designing cities in sustainable ways - i.e., human settlements that are socially just, economically viable, and environmentally sound. Students will explore the literature on sustainable urban design from a variety of perspectives, and then focus on how sustainability theories play out in the Chicago region. How can Chicago’s neighborhoods be designed to promote environmental, social, and economic sustainability goals? This course is part of the College Course Cluster program: Urban Design.
Instructor(s): Sabina Shaikh and Emily Talen Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): This course counts towards the ENST 4th year Capstone requirement. Restricted to 3rd and 4th year students
GISC 28100. Introduction to Geocomputation. 100 Units.
This course investigates the theory and practice of computational approaches in Geographic Information Science. Geocomputation is introduced as a multidisciplinary systems paradigm necessary for solving complex spatial problems and facilitating new understandings. Students will learn about the elements of geographic data models, geospatial topologies, spatial operations, visualizations, and their implementation in Python using libraries such as GeoPandas and Shapely.
Instructor(s): Yue Lin Terms Offered: Autumn. Offered 2024–25
Equivalent Course(s): GISC 38100, ARCH 28202

GISC 28200. Spatial Analysis Methods in Geographic Information Systems. 100 Units.
This course provides an overview of methods of spatial analysis and their implementation in geographic information systems. These methods deal with the retrieval, storage, manipulation and transformation of spatial data to create new knowledge. Examples are spatial join operations, spatial overlay, buffering, measuring accessibility, network analysis and raster operations. The fundamental principles behind the methods are covered as well as their application to real-life problems using open source software such as QGIS.
Instructor(s): Crystal Bae Terms Offered: Autumn. Offered 2024–25
Equivalent Course(s): ARCH 28402, GISC 38200

GISC 28300. Topics in Geographic Information Science. 100 Units.
This advanced course extends and connects both foundational and functional concepts in Geographic Information Science. Students will gain a comprehensive understanding of key areas, including web GIS as well as advanced geospatial visualization techniques. In addition, the course emphasizes the utilization of the R programming language. Students will delve into static, animated, and interactive mapping in R and develop skills in building interactive web mapping applications using Shiny.
Instructor(s): Yue Lin Terms Offered: Winter. Offered 2024-25
Equivalent Course(s): CEGU 28300, GISC 38300, ARCH 28602

GISC 28400. GIScience Practicum. 100 Units.
This applied course in geographic information science builds upon and refines knowledge and geocomputational expertise gained in the GIScience sequence. Students will develop a multifaceted GIS project incorporating spatial thinking in design, infrastructure, and implementation. The 2024 Practicum will emphasize Urban renewal in the mid-20th century, specifically Chicago during the 1960s. Students will conduct guided projects investigating the implications and legacies of urban renewal, utilizing spatial analysis methods such as network analysis, accessibility analysis, machine learning, and/or regression modeling. This course will feature guest lectures from organizations such as the Chicago History Museum and Preservation Chicago to introduce stories and backgrounds of urban renewal in the United States. Students will also have the opportunity to present their work at an event in collaboration with the Chicago History Museum.
Instructor(s): Yue Lin Terms Offered: Spring. Offered 2024–25
Prerequisite(s): Students must complete GISC 28100/38100, GISC 28200/38200 (or equivalent GISC coursework) and SOCI 20253/30253 Introduction to Spatial Data Science before taking this course.
Equivalent Course(s): GISC 38400, CHST 28400

GISC 28700. Readings in Spatial Analysis. 100 Units.
This independent reading option is an opportunity to explore special topics in the exploration, visualization and statistical modeling of geospatial data.
Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Autumn Spring Winter 2023-24
Note(s): This course is consent-only. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form. Available for either quality grades or for P/F grading.
Equivalent Course(s): GISC 38700, ENST 28800

GISC 28702. Introduction to GIS and Spatial Analysis. 100 Units.
This course provides an introduction and overview of how spatial thinking is translated into specific methods to handle geographic information and the statistical analysis of such information. This is not a course to learn a specific GIS software program, but the goal is to learn how to think about spatial aspects of research questions, as they pertain to how the data are collected, organized and transformed, and how these spatial aspects affect statistical methods. The focus is on research questions relevant in the social sciences, which inspires the selection of the particular methods that are covered. Examples include spatial data integration (spatial join), transformations between different spatial scales (overlay), the computation of “spatial” variables (distance, buffer, shortest path), geovisualization, visual analytics, and the assessment of spatial autocorrelation (the lack of independence among spatial variables). The methods will be illustrated by means of open source software such as QGIS and R.
Instructor(s): Crystal Bae Terms Offered: Spring Summer. Offered 2024–25
Equivalent Course(s): SOCI 30283, CEGU 28702, ENST 28702, ARCH 28702, SOCI 20283, PPHA 38712, GISC 38702

GISC 28800. History of Cartography. 100 Units.
This course offers a grand overview of the key developments in mapmaking throughout history worldwide, from pre-literate cartography to the modern interactive digital environment. It looks at the producers, their audience,
the technologies and artistic systems used, and the human and global contexts in which they developed. The course also features experiential learning components with field trips to map collections at Regenstein Library and Newberry Library.

Instructor(s): Yue Lin Terms Offered: Autumn 2024–25
Equivalent Course(s): HIST 35121, CHST 28800, CEGU 28800, ARCH 28800, GISC 38800, HIST 25121

**GISC 29000. Reading/Research: Geographic Information Sciences. 100 Units.**

Independent study for graduate students interested in Geographic Information Sciences (GIS). Students and instructors can arrange a Reading/Research course when the material being studied goes beyond the scope of a particular course, when students are working on material not covered in an existing course, or when students would like to receive academic credit for independent research. Subject, course of study, and requirements must be arranged with the instructor.

Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Autumn Spring Winter 2021-22
Prerequisite(s): Instructor consent required.
Equivalent Course(s): GISC 49000